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Review article

INDUSTRIALIZATION AND FAMILY TRANSFORMATION

Abstract:

Throughout history, families have undergone significant and profound changes. From the pre-industrial era to the present day, family structures have evolved due to industrialization, technological advancements, and shifting societal values. In the pre-industrial period, families focused on imparting essential skills to children, with women primarily managing household affairs and men assuming authoritative roles. However, industrialization brought about numerous changes in family life: family members joined the workforce, women gained prominence in public life, and traditional gender roles shifted. The emergence of capitalism altered economic dynamics, emphasizing individualism. Technological progress further transformed society, impacting medicine, communication, and daily life. Today, marriage rates have significantly declined, divorce rates have increased, fertility rates are lower, and marriage and childbirth are being postponed. This study aims to provide an overview of the characteristics and lifestyles of families before industrialization and to analyze the influence and changes in families brought about by the effects of industrialization.

Keywords: *family, industrialization, family structure, marriage, household, fertility.*

Introduction

The family, as a fundamental social group, holds immense significance and serves as the primary context for socialization within society. Over time, the family unit has experienced numerous changes in its structure, values, lifestyles, daily routines, beliefs, and culture. Globally, families have undergone significant transformations and transitions in every aspect of their functioning, largely influenced by the development of industry within societies.

Industrialisation, beginning in the mid-18th century, represents one of the most important and largest socio-economic changes in human history, continuing to shape societies to this day. This transformative period, marked by the transition from agrarian economies to industrial production, has had profound effects on various aspects of society. Among the most significant of these effects are the changes in family structures, roles, and dynamics. As industrialisation progressed, it not only revolutionized the economic landscape but also instigated a cascade of social changes that redefined the very fabric of family life. The advent of industrialisation brought about significant economic opportunities and challenges. The shift from rural, agricultural livelihoods to urban, factory-based employment altered traditional family roles and relationships. Men, women, and even children found themselves part of the labor force, often under grueling conditions and long hours. This shift had a domino effect on family life, influencing everything from household structure and gender roles to parenting styles and intergenerational relationships.

Urbanisation, a direct consequence of industrialisation, led to the migration of families from rural areas to burgeoning industrial cities. This migration often resulted in the breakdown of extended family networks and the emergence of nuclear families as the predominant family structure. The spatial separation from extended kin fostered a new level of independence but also introduced challenges related to support systems and child-rearing practices.

Moreover, industrialisation brought about shifts in gender roles within the family. The demand for labor in factories saw an increasing number of women entering the workforce, challenging the traditional notion of women as primarily homemakers. This economic participation of women began to redefine their roles within the household and society at large, contributing to the early roots of gender equality movements.

The physical and social environments of industrial cities also played a significant role in reshaping family life. The rapid growth of urban centers often led to overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions. Families were frequently housed in small, cramped quarters, leading to a lack of privacy and increased stress. The proximity to industrial workplaces, coupled with poor living conditions, had implications for family health and well-being, influencing everything from nutrition to disease prevalence.

Child labor emerged as a particularly troubling aspect of industrialisation. With families often reliant on the income generated by all able members,

children were frequently employed in factories under harsh conditions. This practice not only affected children's physical health and development but also had long-term implications for their education and future opportunities. The exploitation of child labor during this period sparked early movements toward labor reforms and child protection laws.

Educational opportunities were another area significantly impacted by industrialisation. As families moved to urban areas and children entered the workforce, traditional education systems were disrupted. Over time, however, the necessity of a skilled labor force led to increased emphasis on public education and vocational training. This shift contributed to changing expectations and aspirations for family members, particularly children, as education became a pathway to upward mobility and improved socio-economic status.

The influence of industrialisation on families is multifaceted and extends into contemporary times. The shifts in family structures, gender roles, and child labor practices set the stage for modern family dynamics and societal norms. Understanding these historical changes is crucial for comprehending the broader implications of industrialisation on contemporary family life and societal development.

Throughout the ages, families have been at the heart of human existence, adapting to changing circumstances and societal shifts. From the pre-industrial era to the present day, family structures have undergone significant transformations. In the pre-industrial period, families centered around imparting essential skills to children, with women primarily managing household affairs while men assumed authoritative roles. Marriage often served practical purposes, such as property rights or social mobility, and divorce was rare. However, industrialisation disrupted these norms. Family members joined the workforce, and women gained prominence beyond the home. Traditional gender roles shifted, and love and romance became primary reasons for marriage. Capitalism emerged, emphasizing individualism and altering economic dynamics. Technological progress further transformed society, with advances in medicine, communication, and daily life reshaping family interactions. Today, fertility rates are lower, and families navigate independence while grappling with technology's influence.

Families Before Industrialization

Until recently, there has been a widespread belief, still held by some, that the emergence of nuclear families is a result of industrialization. Prior to industrialization, the family was considered an extended unit, consisting of the patriarch (usually the oldest male), his wife, their children (at least one of whom was often married and had their own children), and sometimes other relatives such as aunts, uncles, and cousins. However, during the 17th century and onwards, especially in Western Europe, households predominantly comprised nuclear families—consisting of a husband, wife, and children—depending on

class distribution and the assistance needed within the household. Additionally, servants lived in separate quarters within the household (Laslett, 1977).

High infant and child mortality rates before the 19th century led to significant age gaps between siblings. In contrast to the 19th and 20th centuries, where children were less drastically separated by age, parents in earlier times were emotionally less invested in their children due to the likelihood of early mortality (Mitterauer & Sieder, 1982). The shorter life expectancy also meant that parents often did not live to see their youngest child reach adulthood. Consequently, the phase known as the “empty nest,” when a married couple spends time together after their last child leaves home, was typically short or nonexistent for most people (Glick, 1989).

During this period, most families were nuclear because life expectancy was shorter, and households rarely consisted of three or more generations. The eldest son typically inherited the family’s property and material resources, while other siblings left home upon marriage to find work elsewhere. Extended families were more common in rural areas, where childbirth occurred at an earlier age for women. In households with extended structures, when the eldest son married, the father would “retire” and transfer management of the farm to his son, although he would continue to assist with work (Berkner, 1972).

Despite the dominance of nuclear family structures today, households have evolved in various ways. Pre-industrial households functioned as production units, with size determined by labor needs. When children were young, households employed servants—often children and young individuals from other households. As children grew and became capable of work, the number of servants decreased. If a household had sufficient labor, it would often send surplus child labor to other households. During the early Industrial Revolution, a significant number of people migrated to larger cities, living in less-than-ideal conditions. The British government established “workhouses” designed with poor living conditions to discourage reliance on government aid. Due to the cramped design of these workhouses, larger extended families struggled to find adequate sleeping space and carry out daily activities, as multiple families shared the same premises to reduce rent costs. Families before the Industrial Revolution were communities engaged in meat and dairy production, agriculture, and other agricultural activities, with work and domestic life intertwined. Work and home life overlapped, in addition to parents’ work on the farm, children enjoyed various games, contributed to farm work, and learned various skills from their parents. Because of the large amount of time spent in the home and on the farm, parents and children spent time together as a family, helping each other with chores, cultivating small farms, gardening, and often weaving. Families lived at their own pace, worked from 8 to 10 hours a day, had the opportunity to choose their working days and hours, and lived in conditions of sufficient comfort that they made themselves (Laslett, 1977).

The Impact of Industrialization on Families

With the development of industry, families have undergone significant changes. Most notably, there has been a clear separation between domestic and work life. Industrialization has completely transformed the pace of living within households. Families can no longer rely on traditional crafts for income, and children are no longer able to contribute significantly to farm work or household chores. Instead, they are expected to work alongside their parents in factories. Children were highly sought after as factory workers due to their small size, adaptability to cramped spaces, and willingness to accept low wages—often as little as one-tenth of what adult male factory workers earned. Some children as young as eight years old worked in factories and mines for a minimum of 12 hours a day. Adult factory workers often labored for 14 hours a day, and in some cases, even longer—from 3 a.m. to 10 p.m.

Industrialization also significantly impacted the traditional intergenerational relationships within families. Fathers no longer transmitted their knowledge and trade skills to their children, as factory work rendered these skills seemingly unnecessary. Leisure time and family interactions were drastically reduced. During periods of unemployment for fathers (although rare), family roles shifted dramatically. Children became breadwinners, contributing to the household income, while fathers assisted with domestic tasks. The role of women also evolved with the industrial economy. Unmarried women worked in factories or mines, but upon marriage, they assumed all domestic responsibilities on the farm or at home. Some women continued working in factories even after marriage, sometimes enduring 16-hour workdays to support their families.

The Industrial Revolution led to an increase in the number of newborns due to the demand for child labor. Working-class families often had large families—sometimes with as many as ten children. Babies were often nursed by wet nurses while their mothers worked. In France, hygiene reports blamed mothers for infant mortality because they did not personally care for their children but instead went to work. Pregnant women also worked in factories and mines, and some even gave birth in these workplaces, contributing to high mortality rates among women and newborns (Fuchs, 1994).

Working conditions in factories and mines during the Industrial Revolution were appalling. Long working hours, lack of experience, poor lighting, fatigue, and cramped spaces resulted in numerous injuries and deaths among workers, especially children. Limbs often became trapped in large machines, causing severe injuries or death. Additionally, exposure to unhygienic conditions, pollutants, gases, and dust in the workplace led to lung damage and diseases, frequently resulting in fatalities.

In summary, the overall quality of life for working-class families deteriorated due to industrialization. By the late 19th century, the middle class had become more distinct from the lower working class. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, the middle and lower classes shared similar lifestyles, with only the upper

class standing out. However, industrialization created a clearer divide between the middle and lower classes. Middle-class individuals tended to work as shopkeepers, bank clerks, and other white-collar professions.

During the era of industrialization, significant changes occurred in both society and family dynamics. Traditionally, certain professions—such as insurance agents, accountants, managers, doctors, lawyers, and teachers—were predominantly occupied by men. Meanwhile, women primarily fulfilled the role of homemakers, managing household responsibilities, caring for children, and tending to the farm. In middle-class households, it was common to hire a servant occasionally to assist women with domestic tasks.

Men typically worked shorter hours, usually from 8 to 12 hours a day, allowing them more time at home with their families. Middle-class children often attended school during the day, learning reading and writing skills. Male children could then pursue higher education. However, even within the middle class, work became increasingly separate from home life. The home remained a place where family members felt secure and received emotional support.

Women from the middle class were emotionally devoted to their children, and improved hygiene practices at home, along with reduced child labor on farms, contributed to lower child mortality rates. Consequently, women began having fewer children. One common reason for this change was that families couldn't afford to send all their children to school.

The impact of industrialization extended beyond the family sphere. Thanks to the influence of feminist movements, women's rights advanced significantly. Although progress has been made toward equality, certain sectors still exhibit gender-based subordination. While men initially held exclusive rights to higher education, opportunities gradually opened for women during the 19th and 20th centuries. In Britain, women gained the right to higher education in 1868, although they received certificates rather than diplomas. Eventually, by the late 19th and early 20th centuries, women could earn recognized degrees. Similarly, in the United States, women gained access to higher education in 1835, but societal fears about losing femininity led to the establishment of women-only colleges with controlled environments. France allowed women to pursue higher education from 1884, and Germany followed suit in 1900. By the end of the 20th century, women worldwide had the right to higher education. Sweden was the first country to officially grant women the right to recognized diplomas and university attendance in 1873. Saudi Arabia, the last country to do so, allowed women access to higher education in 2005 (Charles & Lorna Duffin, 2013).

Household Structure

From the pre-industrial period to the present day, significant changes have occurred in the composition and structure of households. Initially, households often consisted of extended or nuclear families. However, today we ob-

serve various types of households, including extended families (larger family units), nuclear families (parents and children), reconstituted families (due to divorce or loss of a parent), single-parent households, unmarried couples, caregiver households, and more. The shift in family formation models has made traditional boundaries, roles, and structures less prevalent. Notably, the average age at which people marry has increased significantly. Many young adults now begin their independent lives by living alone, with partners, or roommates, rather than leaving their parental home solely upon marriage.

During the late 19th century, the rise of the “primary individual” and the ideal of individualism became prominent. The term “primary individual” refers to someone living alone in a household without other family members (Popenoe, 1988). This period witnessed the emergence of single-person households.

While data on early single-person households is scarce, demographic research reports from United Nations indicate that the prevalence of single-person households has steadily increased over time. For instance:

In 1950, southern Germany had 21.61% single-person households, while western Germany had 19.39%. In the United States in 1960, the figure was 13.1%, and in Japan, it was 16.51%. By 1993, Ghana had 24.32%, Japan 25.60%, and Israel 19.66% single-person households. In 2010, Denmark had the highest percentage at 46.20%, followed by Norway and Sweden with 41.10% each, and Germany with 39.80%.

These trends continue, with northern European countries showing the highest prevalence of single-person households. For example, in 2018, Norway had 47%, Denmark 44.10%, and Finland 43%. In central Europe, Germany led with 41.70%, followed by Switzerland (38.10%) and Austria (37.20%). The Netherlands had 38.30%, and France had 36.20%. Eastern European countries like Estonia (40.30%) and Lithuania (37.70%) also had significant percentages. In southern Europe, Bulgaria (33.30%), Italy (32.60%), and Slovenia (29.60%) stood out (United Nations, 2022).

In Asia, as a continent with the highest number of single-person households, Japan stands out with 34.53%. In Africa, Botswana leads with 27.89%, while in South America, Uruguay has the highest proportion at 23.52%. In the United States, 27.6% of households consist of a single individual, whereas in Australia, the figure is 24.99%. The trend of people living alone was virtually nonexistent before industrialization, but today we observe a significant increase in single-person households.

Across most countries, the number of households with only one person tends to rise with age and income. Older individuals, aged 64 and above, are more likely to live alone, ranging from 13% in Mexico to 46% in Denmark. Meanwhile, the percentage of households with individuals aged 30 to 49 varies from 3% in Mexico to 24% in Norway. Interestingly, in 31 countries, less than 10% of young people aged 15 to 29 live alone. However, this is not the case in northern European countries and the Netherlands, where 20% to 30% of young people up to age 29 live independently.

In 2022, the European Union registered approximately 198 million households, with an average of 2.3 members per household. In 2016, nearly two-thirds of EU households consisted of one or two individuals. Single-person households accounted for 32.5%, while two-person households made up 31.2%. Larger households were less common: 16.3% had three members, 13.6% had four members, and households with five or more members were relatively rare (4.4% for five-member households and 2.0% for six or more members).

Analyzing household structures in the European Union between 2009 and 2022, we observe an increase in single-parent households with one or more children. In 2009, there were 2.5 million such households, which grew to 6.2 million in 2022. Additionally, households consisting of a single adult saw growth to 16.9 million in 2022. On the other hand, nuclear families with one or more children decreased, while partner-only households (couples without children) increased (UN, national statistical agencies, OECD, Deutschland in Daten, 2019).

Marriage and divorce

Marriage and divorce have evolved significantly from the pre-industrial period to today. Unlike in the past, where marriages were often arranged for practical reasons, modern marriages are based on mutual love and consideration of individual needs and desires. Research conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reveals a decline in marriage rates over the past 50 years.

Marriage rates vary considerably across OECD countries. In some nations (including Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain), marriage rates are very low. For instance, in 2020, the marriage rate was less than 2 marriages per 1000 people in these countries. In contrast, other countries (such as Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Turkey) have rates ranging from 3 to 6 marriages per 1000 people. The overall OECD average falls between 2.5 and 5 marriages per 1000 people, with an average of 3.7 marriages.

Examining data from 32 OECD countries with available information, we find that marriage rates declined by 20% in 2020. The most significant decreases occurred in Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Spain (around 50%), followed by Australia and France (approximately 30%), and only about 10% in Germany, Japan, and Korea. Overall, marriage rates have decreased globally over the past few decades.

In 1970, most OECD countries had marriage rates ranging from 7 to 10 marriages per 1000 people. By 1995, this declined to approximately 5 to 7 marriages per 1000 people. Compared to the pre-industrial period, where 70% to 80% of the population married, today's marriage rates are significantly lower (OECD Family Database, 2022).

Divorce is much more prevalent in today's world compared to the pre-industrial period. Unlike in the past, where marriage often occurred for practical reasons, modern marriages are influenced by personal needs and satisfaction.

Additionally, the legal process for divorce is now more accessible than it was during the pre-industrial era.

In 2020, divorce rates varied significantly across different countries. For instance, divorce rates ranged from 0.7 divorces per 1000 people in Ireland and Mexico to 2.7 per 1000 in Denmark, Latvia, and Lithuania. Over the past decades, declining marriage rates have been accompanied by an increase in divorce rates (OECD Family Database, 2022).

Several studies directly examining retrospective reports on divorce reasons highlight various factors. For example:

Hawkins, Willoughby, and Doherty (2012) found that the most confirmed reasons for divorce included partners growing apart due to different paths (55%), communication problems (53%), and financial behavior within the marriage (40%) (Howkins, et al., 2012).

Amato and Previti (2003) discovered that the most cited reasons for divorce, when directly asked of divorced individuals, were infidelity (21.6%), incompatibility (19.2%), and substance use (10.6%).

Another study from the same authors revealed that the most common reasons for divorce were lack of commitment (85%), excessive conflict or arguments (61%), and infidelity or extramarital affairs (58%); Marrying at a young age (45.1%); Communication problems (57.7%); Domestic violence (23.5%); Financial issues (36.7%); Lack of support from extended family (17.3%); Substance use (34.6%); Religious differences and partner's education level (13.3%); Health problems (18.2%); Lack of love and infidelity (59.6%); Insufficient commitment to the marriage (75%) (Amato & Previti, 2003).

Approximately half of marriages worldwide end in divorce, and consistent themes emerge across cultures and generations: communication breakdowns, incompatibility, and insufficient commitment. Interestingly, as divorce rates have risen dramatically in recent decades, the trend of getting married has declined. Living in non-marital partnerships has become more common, with one-quarter of households worldwide consisting of such unions. Additionally, according to EUROSTAT (2018) 42% of children are born outside of marital union.

The growth of population and fertility

The growth of the global population and fertility rates has undergone significant changes over time. In the 17th century, the world's population was estimated to be around 500 million people, whereas today it stands at approximately 8.1 billion.

The impact of population growth and increased life expectancy on societies is multifaceted. On the positive side, a large population represents substantial consumer power, benefiting industrial profits. However, it also poses challenges for social and healthcare systems. The increased demand for health

and social services, as well as basic resources like food, water, and energy, leads to excessive exploitation of natural resources and environmental degradation.

Urbanization and population pressure on land and housing affect urban planning and infrastructure. Meanwhile, the pursuit of better living and working conditions drives population migration, influencing regional and national stability. As life expectancy has improved, demographic structures have shifted, with a growing number of elderly individuals worldwide. This presents challenges related to pension needs, healthcare, and social services. Additionally, there is an increased demand for affordable labor and mechanization, including robotics, to efficiently produce essential resources.

Expectations for education and adaptation to technological advancements lead to longer working lives, continuous learning, and retraining for various job positions. Japan faces a significant challenge due to its aging population. Often referred to as a “hyper-aged” country, Japan currently has 21% of its population aged 65 and older. It is projected that by 2050, this age group will comprise 40% of the total population (Coulmas, 2007). This demographic shift contributes to rising taxes to support pensions and increased costs for maintaining a decent standard of living. Consequently, there is a decline in marriage rates and fertility in Japan. Notably, 60% of unmarried men and 80% of unmarried women aged 24 to 30 still live with their parents (Yamada, 2003). Many other countries face the same demographic challenge. Italy, for instance, contends with 23% of its population being aged 65 and older. Finland, Portugal, and Greece follow closely with around 22%. In Croatia, Malta, Portugal, Serbia, Slovenia, and Spain, approximately 21% of the population falls into this age group.

China has tackled its population growth issue through the “Later, Longer, Fewer” campaign. In 1973, this initiative raised the legal marriage age, setting it at 23 years for women and 25 years for men. Additionally, it encouraged couples to space pregnancies by 3 to 5 years. As a result, China’s fertility rate dropped significantly from 6.1 to 2.7 children per woman between 1970 and 1980.

In 1980, the campaign introduced stricter measures, limiting families to one child per couple. These restrictions were in place until 2005. While successful in curbing population growth, the policy led to an increase in the proportion of people aged 60 and above, reaching 17.8%. By 2050, it is estimated that this age group will constitute 40% of China’s population.

The most pressing demographic challenge worldwide is no longer rapid population growth but rather population aging. Reduced fertility rates extend the reproductive window, resulting in a significant gap between the working-age population and the percentage of older adults. In the 17th century, fertility rates averaged 6-7 children per woman. By 2015, the global average had dropped to 2.3 children per woman.

Demographic shifts necessitate strategic preparedness and coordinated changes in infrastructure, human capital investment, and age-related policies

(Chen & Huang, 2020). While China's fertility decline was directly influenced by government intervention, other countries experience fertility rate declines due to various factors such as economic conditions, education, career development, lifestyle trends, and more.

Currently, Hong Kong and South Korea have the lowest fertility rates, with 0.75 and 0.88 children per woman, respectively. Singapore, Malta, Ukraine, Spain, Italy, and Japan fall within the range of 1.02 to 1.3 children per woman. Finland, Croatia, Poland, Canada, Austria, Russia, and Norway have rates from 1.39 to 1.50. Sweden, Denmark, France, Turkey, and India range from 1.67 to 2.03. Meanwhile, Central African countries like Gabon and Chad have the highest fertility rates, with 3.49 and 6.25 children per woman, respectively (Gapminder, 2017).

Conclusion

From the pre-industrial period to the present day, families have undergone significant transitions, leading to the creation of contemporary family life. During the pre-industrial era, families primarily focused on teaching children trades and skills necessary for societal survival. Women held the role of "mistress" of the household, confined to the private sphere, while men operated in the public domain. Men controlled family finances and assets, assuming the authoritative position as family heads. This patriarchal structure prevailed during that time.

Families were relatively self-sufficient units, producing most of what they consumed. Women, men, children, and servants all contributed to household tasks, each based on age and gender. However, with the onset of industrialization, more family members began working for wages in factories and workshops. Women increasingly appeared in the public sphere, and over time, they gained nearly equal opportunities and rights as men.

The growth of capitalism accompanied industrial development, granting power to capitalists who controlled production means and capital. This shift transformed traditional systems and values, fostered urbanization, and established democratic living with capitalist value systems, emphasizing individualism. Technological advancements further shaped society, affecting production, economy, transportation, medicine, and daily life. Notably, modern medicine has significantly reduced mortality rates compared to the pre-industrial era, dramatically extending human lifespans.

Today, fertility rates are lower than during the pre-industrial and early industrial periods. This decline results from increased life expectancy and the rise of individualism. Family dynamics have also evolved. Contemporary family life no longer adheres strictly to traditional roles. Children learn not only from their families but also attend educational institutions and access knowledge through technology, including the internet.

Parenting styles have shifted away from authoritarian approaches, emphasizing understanding and considering the desires, feelings, and thoughts of all family members, including children. Independence and individuality are encouraged. However, excessive technology use, such as prolonged screen time, poses negative consequences. Families must promote balanced technology usage and cultivate healthy habits for physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being.

Despite these changes, families remain crucial for socialization and support across generations. The pursuit of strong family bonds, support, and love endures as a fundamental aspect of human life throughout history.

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